Palestine

STANDARD FORM NO. 64

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Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : S/P - Mr. Kennan

FROM : S/A - Philip C. Jessup

SUBJECT: Colonel William Eddy's Report

DATE: April 18, 1949

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
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I have read with very much interest Colonel Eddy's "Observations Concerning Palestine and the Arab Countries." I do not intend to write a long memorandum or comment in detail but would like to mention the following points.

1. While it is true that the successes of Israel have seriously disrupted the Arab world, I think that these events have merely accelerated a development which would have been likely in any case. It seems to me that, as pointed out in paragraph one of NE's memorandum, the experience of the last year or so has shown the fundamental weakness of the Arab states not only in a military sense but also in a political sense.

2. While I certainly have reason to be familiar with the effectiveness of Zionist propaganda, I don't think the Department should abandon top-level recommendations at appropriate moments regarding Israeli policies. Sooner or later for one reason or another, I believe that the United States will have to take a stand against Israeli expansion. I believe that there are a good many influential individuals in Israel who are quite prepared to see their country develop through the use of their skills and energy and in cooperation with the Arabs rather than through conquest of the Arabs. It seems to me that the most profitable line of attack, given all of the various factors, would be to give evidence of support for this type of Israeli statesmen and to work as partners with Israel and with the United Kingdom in the economic development of the whole area.

with Arab acquiescence and assistance

3. With reference to paragraph 1.c. of Gordon Merriam's memorandum, the time is ripe to develop studies in the United States of the Near East. For instance, Columbia University has been approached both by American and by Near Eastern sources with a view to the establishment of a Near Eastern Institute. If the Department thinks this is important, I think it could be stimulated both with universities and with the foundations.

Philip C. Jessup

POLICY PLANNING STAFF

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

THE UNDER SECRETARY

S/P

March 18, 1949

S/P - Mr. Kennan

Subject: NE's Views on Colonel Eddy's "Observations Concerning Palestine and the Arab Countries."

You asked me for views on Bill Eddy's memoranda respecting his conversations on the general situation in the Near East. I thought I would start by getting NE's views, which are attached.

I am in agreement with what NE has to say, but would add the following comments:

1. It should be realized that Bill Eddy has given us a round-up of views expressed to him by Arabs and others. He does not, in the attached papers, give his own. However, in an address under the auspices of the Middle East Institute on March 4, he made the following points:

a. "Something has happened." U.S. prestige in the Near East at the end of the war stood ace-high. It has plummeted as the result of our Palestine policy.

b. The hard core of U.S. influence - the graduates of U.S. colleges in the Near East - are no longer listened to. The Arabs are disillusioned and bewildered and do not know where to turn.

c. The Near East knows the U.S. far better than the U.S. knows the Near East. A big effort must be made to acquaint the American public with the Arab world.

d. We cannot

TOP SECRET

d. We cannot rely upon the conservatism induced by Islam and the old social structure to preserve the Arab world against the spread of communism. The disappointment and anger with respect to the west are possibly strong enough to break down the old structure.

e. In creating a state by force, by a minority, based upon nationalism, race and religion, the Zionists have created a dangerous precedent in a minority-ridden part of the world which Moscow can be expected to use to excellent advantage.

2. I would agree with Paragraph II (on page 2) of NE's comments as a short-term proposition. On any other basis I would not bet a cent. It is now clear to some of the Israeli leaders (Dr. Weizmann has already said this to our Ambassador) that Palestine is too small, has too meagre resources and sufficient funds are unlikely to become available, to permit Zionist plans for immigration and development to be carried out. We in the Department have for years foreseen that this would be the case, but the important thing is that the Israelis now have to look at this problem which they hitherto chose to ignore. We have, then, something like a German problem arising: a young nation of energetic, technically competent people which considers itself cramped and to be superior to its neighbors. And Israel has essentially the same choice which the Germans had: to satisfy its needs and aspirations by cooperation with its neighbors, or by dominating them. On the basis of the record thus far, I would expect them to choose the latter course under cover of superficial and specious legality. The only development which would make this game not worth the candle, is, so far as I can see, a disappearance of the Soviet menace which would permit other countries and consequently the UN to be less subservient to U.S. policy.

3. I also agree with Paragraph III of NE's comment to the effect that Near Eastern countries are unlikely to come under the control of Moscow by internal upheaval. My view is based not only upon the conservative character of Near Eastern society arising from religion and feudalism, but also from the following factors: (1) the

NE peoples

NE peoples are accustomed to oppression in all its various forms, and there is every reason to believe that the governing classes will keep subversive movements under control. They have the power to do so and are not averse to using it; (2) the USSR has no common frontier with any of the Arab countries, either directly or through a satellite. (This situation would change drastically if the USSR came into control of Iran or the Azerbaijan part of it).

What the NE governments are now trying to do, I believe, is to disengage themselves from the Palestine fighting with the best grace possible in order to cut their losses on an unprofitable operation, to avoid weakening themselves further in the face of the Soviet menace (in whatever force and from whatever quarter), and to get on with economic development, housing, education, etc. I look, therefore, for Arab governments which are suspicious and disillusioned toward the West, which are anti-Communist, and which find themselves obliged to maintain correct and rather lukewarm relations with the West for purposes of ultimate protection against Russia and Israel, and for trade, loans and technical assistance.

4. You asked me whether there is anything that we can do. Most of our major policy decisions regarding Palestine have been unsound. In between decisions, we work as soundly and constructively as the latest lunacy permits. Basically, however, our Arab policy is a captive of Israeli policy working through the Zionist pressure group in this country. This will continue to be the case, so far as I can judge, until or unless some other factor asserts itself so emphatically and heavily that it overweighs the domestic political factor.

That could happen very quickly if the Russians, blocked in Western Europe, should spill over into Iran and set the Kurds moving in Iraq. Any such power move would require us to mend our Arab fences and hobble the Israelis in a hurry, regardless of what else we might do. I cannot visualize anything else happening in the foreseeable future that would straighten out our Arab policy, unless our military people, in connection with their strategic planning for the Middle East, demand that our political policy be brought into line with our strategic requirements.

In short,

In short, I am of the opinion that we cannot have a sound Arab policy without first clearing the decks by a sound Palestine policy. We have written the latter, but in present circumstances we cannot get high-level approval for it. Even if we got it, it would be overturned whenever the Zionists felt like buying a page in the New York Times./

Of course, if some sort of a peace comes to reign in Palestine, we can move on the Point IV and loan front. But that would probably not require formal Planning Staff action.

We have to recognize, however, that in a fundamental sense our Palestine policy tends to promote communism in the Arab world. Its effect is to weaken those countries by the dissipation of their scanty surpluses in opposing the Israelis, and to delay their internal development and reform. If communism is not successful as a disruptive force in the Arab countries, that will be in spite of our policy.

GPM.

Gordon P. Merriam

STANDARD FORM NO. 64

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Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : S/P - Mr. Merriam DATE: March 15, 1949

FROM : NE - Mr. Mattison GHM

SUBJECT: Comment on paper entitled "Observations Concerning Palestine and the Arab Countries"

NE is in full agreement with the basic conclusions set forth in the attached memorandum, namely, (1) that Israel has marked military superiority over the Arab States and benefitted materially by the UN first truce, (II) that the establishment of the State of Israel will be a disturbing factor in the Near East for many years, (III) that Arab unity has been dealt a severe blow and the political stability of the Arab States has been seriously affected, (IV) that the UN has been discredited in the minds of the Arab governments and Arab peoples, and (V) that the USSR supported the establishment of Israel in order to foster instability in the Near Eastern area.

While agreeing with these conclusions, however, NE is of the opinion that some statements in the memorandum are perhaps too sweeping and others are not entirely accurate. Taking the five headings seriatim, the following comments are offered:

I. The impression is given that the Arabs may have defeated Israel if the UN had not intervened and imposed a truce which worked to the advantage of the Israelis. While it is true that the first UN truce was to the Israelis' advantage, it is considered very doubtful that the Arabs could have defeated Israel if the truce had not been imposed. The Israelis would probably have held out defensively until they obtained sufficient military supplies and then have defeated the Arab forces even though the latter had obtained supplies from the British. In other words, the result would probably have been the same eventually, although with bloodier fighting, if the first UN truce had been been imposed. The second UN truce actually saved the Arabs from military disaster. The importance of air control, while important, seems to be overdrawn: without it the Israelis would still have had military superiority. The blunt fact is that the Jewish troops were more capable, more determined and better led than the Arabs. The Arabs never achieved unity of acti command, and their combined war effort, based on weak national economies, was inadequate against the superior organization and methods of the more modern Jewish State with its resources drawn from the West. If the first UN truce had not been

POLICY PLANNING
STAFF

MAR 15 1949

Department of State

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not been imposed, the Arabs might conceivably have defeated the Jews by carrying out a sustained all-out effort on all fronts and without regard for losses, but it is apparent from subsequent events that the Arabs lacked the unity, ability or the means to have carried out successfully an all-out attack of this character.

Comment

II. While the Israeli frontiers have not been definitely delineated, it is perhaps too much to say categorically that Israel intends to expand into the Arab and Moslem world. The frontiers of Israel will be set within Palestine; expansion beyond that would involve Great Britain as an ally of the Arabs, and the UN.

Comment

III. Although instability of a serious and widespread character has been introduced into the Arab states as a result of the war in Palestine, it is extremely conjectural whether Iraq would soon fall into communist control or whether Syria will break up in the near future into autonomous sheikhdoms, etc. A more probable result of present unrest would be for ultra-nationalistic and anti-western governments, such as Raschid Ali's Independence Party in Iraq, or the Wafd Party in Egypt, to supersede some of the present governments. If such governments came into power, their ties with the West would be weak and, lacking such Western support, they would be isolated and highly vulnerable to Soviet penetration and eventual overthrow.

IV. NE is in full agreement with this paragraph relating to the discrediting of the UN in the Arab World.

V. Although communism is a real and serious danger in Iraq, the statement that the communists "may upset the Iraq Government at any time" is an exaggerated view. The implication that the USSR is making headway with the Syrian President is misleading; our reports from Damascus indicate the contrary.

NEA:NE:GHMattison/
ABColquitt/iy

January 20, 1949.

OBSERVATIONS CONCERNING PALESTINE AND THE ARAB COUNTRIES

/NOTE: The following observations are the result of a visit to Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Lebanon, November 24, 1948 to January 19, 1949. This summary includes only items on which there was general agreement among those interviewed. Reports of interviews with individuals are given separately./

I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN PALESTINE.

The new State of Israel is strong in military equipment, finances, and morale, and possesses a striking power which could easily seize the remainder of Palestine as well as adjacent parts of Lebanon, Syria, or of Egypt north of the Suez Canal. It is probable that the next military adventure will be to annex the Jerusalem area. The Arabs cannot successfully renew the appeal to arms: they lack unity, leadership, arms and airplanes.

This is a striking reversal of the situation as it was on June 1, 1948. Israel then was screaming to high Heaven for a "cease fire" order from the United Nations, whereupon the Great Powers forced the first truce using explicit threats to Arab countries failing to comply. At that time the Arabs, assured by treaty with Britain of continued supply of arms and ammunition, were on the offensive, had reached to a point eight miles from Tel Aviv, and had cut to the coast between Haifa and Nakoura. With the truce and its stipulation that neither side should get military advantage of any kind during the truce, Britain suspended the military supplies to the Arabs, previously delivered in accordance with treaty agreements. Meanwhile, however, arms procured from many sources — including more than fifty Messerschmidt fighters — poured into Israel. By the time the first truce expired these Messerschmidt fighters took complete control of the air and were able to disperse enemy infantry and to "strafe" Arab towns and villages just as before Dunkirk British and French troops had been rendered impotent by Messerschmidt planes.

Arab morale was further damaged by the success of British diplomacy in detaching Trans-Jordan and Iraq from the joint Arab military program, and by the battle defeats inflicted by Israel on the Arabs in the successive seizures by Israel of Arab territory without regard to United Nations orders to retire to positions held at the various "cease fire" dates.

II. A LONG-RANGE DISASTER.

The establishment of the State of Israel by force, with intimidation of Arab governments by the U.S. and the U.S.S.R., with the cutting off of British arms and ammunition (the Arabs' only source of supply), with ample sources for Israel of munitions and finance, the Israeli battle-victory is complete, but it has solved nothing. If boundaries to an Israeli State, any boundaries, had been

set and guaranteed by the Great Powers, peace might return to the area. On the contrary, we have actually a victorious state which is limited to no frontiers and which is determined that no narrow limits shall be set. The Near East is faced with the almost certain prospect of a profound and growing disturbance by Israel which may last for decades.

(a) Instead of restoring the boundaries of the Province of Judea as they were in 70 A.D., the Israeli leaders now state freely, though usually unofficially, their demand for an ever-expanding empire. Their present possessions are regarded by them as only a beachhead into the Arab and Muslim World — a large part of which they intend to exploit. They are not prepared to live off what the land will yield as the Arabs do.

(b) The index of the cost of living in Israel has risen to 500% of what it was in that area from 1933 to 1939. Having driven out the Arabs from their homes, Israel lacks cheap labor, and without a very large per capita subsidy the economy of the state would soon collapse. This the Israeli Government intends to prevent by continuing to secure funds from Zionists and other sympathizers abroad, by large loans, and, as soon as possible, by the exploitation of the Arab hinterland, especially the agriculture and industries of Syria and Iraq.

(c) Alone among the Great Powers, Britain has been working on a plan to restore a balance between the forces in Palestine, but it already appears that this plan is probably doomed to fail. Zionist pressure in the U.S.A., Anglophobia in Iraq and Egypt, and above all, Russia's determination to prolong chaos in the Near East and to complete the discrediting of British and American diplomacy, combine to work against the policy of the British Government and its collaborators -- King Abdulla of Trans-Jordan and the Prime Minister of Iraq, Nuri Said.

(d) The duration of the disaster is guaranteed also by the unsolved problem of 700,000 Arab refugees. Whether or not these refugees are fed, clothed, and kept alive for the time being, they remain as a primary source of resentment, distress and continuing expense. No workable plan has been proposed for their resettlement in a gainful livelihood. Israel sneers at the U.N. order to repatriate or compensate them. Riots have already taken place in some of the refugee camps and refugee leaders have addressed their followers in vituperative language, denouncing Americans, British, Zionists, and Arab League failures, of which they are the helpless victims. They include many intellectuals who are more than ripe for Communist propaganda, some of whom are now meeting regularly in Aleppo.

III. ARAB POLITICS.

Since the Arab military defeats and the complete rebuff of the Arab position at the United Nations Assembly in Paris, the Arab League has practically disappeared as a political force, and the several Arab countries are pursuing nationalistic policies looking for allies and friends.

Only Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and perhaps Lebanon have a good chance to succeed in maintaining their independence by following the new isolationist policy. Saudi Arabia alone follows a completely realistic policy of refusing to commit suicide for sentimental or fanatical reasons. Egypt is still internally insecure, and with recurring assassinations and riotings may face internal upheaval and the liquidation of the upperclasses.

Iraq, potentially wealthy in natural resources, would be the first to fall into Communist control. Although intelligent leaders have managed to hold Syria together, it is believed by some foreign diplomats and many Arab leaders that Syria, as a nation, will break up in two or three years, with autonomous shaikhdoms in Aleppo, Homs and Hama, a Kurdish puppet province in the Jezireh, and with the Jebel Druze delivering Damascus to Abdulla of Trans-Jordan unless the Israelis get Damascus first.

IV. THE UNITED NATIONS.

The United Nations is already completely discredited in the minds of the Arab Governments and the Arab peoples. There are many reasons for this, but the evidence usually cited is the failure of the U.N. or the Mediator to enforce U.N. orders to Israel. For example:

(a) To prevent arms and Czeckoslovakian airplanes from reaching Israel.

(b) To deliver the assassins of Count Bernadotte, although their identity is known to hundreds of Jews.

(c) To repatriate or compensate over half a million refugees.

(d) To permit U.N. observers with Israeli forces when they are on the offensive.

(e) To retire to the lines occupied at the October 14 'cease fire" period.

(f) To evacuate areas given to the Arabs by the U.N. proposal of November 29, 1947; although at the same time insisting upon invading the Negeb, to excuse which they quote the same U.N. partition proposal. (The Arab areas occupied in defiance of the U.N., include Western Galilee, Jaffa, Nazareth, and villages over the Lebanon frontier.)

(g) To respect the international character of the Jerusalem area.

V. RUSSIA'S PURPOSE.

Although Russia has officially sided with Israel she is actually on the side of disorder and hunger. Russia and her satellites armed Israel to an extent few people in the United States understand; but Communists are also active among the Arabs. They may upset the Iraq Government at any time; they have succeeded in establishing contact with the President of Syria to whom overtures have been made; they have captured the leadership of Arabs in Nazareth, Jaffa, and Acre, who are despairing of any effective help from Arab countries and are turning to Communism. (In Nazareth, for example, no one can hold or get a job without the permission of the Communist boss.) The U.S.S.R. will help Israel expand until the Arab Governments, as well as British and American policies, are completely discredited. The Russians will then decide whether to make a puppet of the Zionists or of the Arabs -- if the situation in the Near East continues to degenerate, Russia may find both parties begging for the honor. The Prime Ministers of two Arab countries told me they have reason to believe that, blocked in Western Europe, Russia will divert her Cold War to the "soft-underbelly" of the Near East.